**The Jigsaw Stitch**

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/10019213.

| | |
|---|---|
| Rating: | Explicit |
| Archive Warning: | Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings |
| Category: | M/M |
| Fandom: | Hannibal (TV) |
| Relationship: | Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter |
| Characters: | Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Jack Crawford, Jimmy Price, Brian Zeller, Alana Bloom |
| Additional Tags: | Set season two, sex-pollen fic, slow-tell, Dubious Consent, multiple POVs |
| Language: | English |
| Stats: | Published: 2017-02-28 Words: 5,870 Chapters: 1/? |

# The Jigsaw Stitch

by rainer76

Summary

The top is half-sleeved, v-necked; his feet are naked. A red shock blanket lies discarded beside him. His hair is damp from the shower, uncombed and tousled, drying with ill-style. He feels itchy under the surface of his skin, not so much disconnected but buzzing, as if every cell in his body is clamouring for attention. The right kind of attention and he knows now, keenly, what that entails.

From the doorway Jack says heavily. “Hannibal, how are you feeling?”

“Mortified.” The emotion is clearly expected by Jack and the deception costs him nothing. “And sorely embarrassed, too.”

Or that one case involving sex pollen

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

The PRESENT:

One Garrison (bespoke) three-piece suit, with wide spaced brown chalk on a light grey material. One silk, dark brown, shirt tailored to form: one red/brown blended tie with fleur-de-lis in miniature pattern. A pair of Salvatore Ferragamo gentlemen's shoes, one antique wristwatch of sentimental value, and a Montegrappa fountain pen.

Hannibal sits on the neatly made cot, left knee hitched over his right, and balances Jack's itemised list of destroyed belongings on his lap.

He had a wallet with ID and minimal change in his possession as well as his credit cards (a nuisance to replace), a small amount of detritus in his pockets that consisted of a handkerchief, gloves, and a half-roll of peppermint mints. Jack asked for a tally - what his clothing and personal belongings amounted to, so the FBI could reimburse his losses - but the cost is insignificant. Hannibal's thoughts lay else-when.

His three-piece suit was lost inside a bio-waste unit hours ago, destined for the furnace. In the interim he's been given a set of hospital scrubs to wear, a style of clothing he hasn't missed, or worn, in decades.

Evidently the scrubs came from the children's ward.

They depict unicorns in mid-tousle, their white horns interlocked together on a background of strawberry clouds. He'd wager Cheryl MacKenzie is responsible for the travesty – or at least – the nurse wielded the camera on her phone like a potential blackmailer.

The top is half-sleeved, v-necked; his feet are naked. A red shock blanket lies discarded beside him.

His hair is damp from the shower, uncombed and tousled, drying with ill-style. He feels itchy under the surface of his skin, not so much disconnected but buzzing, as if every cell in his body is clamouring for attention. The *right* kind of attention and he knows now, keenly, what that entails.

From the doorway Jack says heavily. "Hannibal, how are you feeling?"

"Mortified." The emotion is clearly expected by Jack and the deception costs him nothing. "And sorely embarrassed, too."

Jack doesn't do the polite thing and attempt to wave off Hannibal's admission with a quaint platitude. 'You have nothing to be embarrassed about', or, 'it wasn't your fault', never passes his lips. Jack stands with his arms folded across his chest, expression flat. Curiously, Hannibal turns on the cot to face him directly.

The room is repugnant with cleaning agents, with the rot of disease and the older tang of spilt blood lying underneath it. Hannibal imagines he can smell the history of the building, that if

he flicked his tongue out he could scent the underlying trauma, such aromas used to be comforting. Jack smells irritated.

“Your blood work has come back?”

“Yes, a clean bill of health. Cheryl MacKenzie dropped the paperwork off half an hour ago.”

“Good. We thought you’d be more comfortable with the staff at John Hopkins. It being your old stomping grounds and all.”

The signals of affability are apparent, but Jack remains posted beside the door, his body a blockade. Jack Crawford is a good liar but not nearly as well practiced as Hannibal is.

“We?”

"Alana and I.”

“Ah.” His voice roughens, letting his supposed ‘embarrassment’ seep through. Hannibal turns his hands over, looking at the half crescent marks on his wrists, the patterned bruises. His lips feel kiss swollen; the flesh between his thighs is tender with bite marks. “And William?”

Jack looks at him – a hard glance - trying to determine if the formality is an attempt at emotional distance. Hannibal’s expression remains inscrutable, and with a sigh, Jack relents and finally steps into the room, his bulk crowding up the space. “We’re still in the dark. Unlike you his blood work hasn’t come back yet.”

Will has no connections to the hospital staff, no fast-tracking of his own results. Hannibal frowns. “He is not at John Hopkins?”

“We thought it prudent to take him to a different hospital.”

Hannibal disagrees, vehemently.

His body hums, well used, still recovering from the ordeal. He can remember the moment when they were pried apart, separated from one another forcibly. In his foggy recall of events, Hannibal had every intention of killing Jack, Price, and whoever else stood in his way. To be honest, the thought retains some appeal.

“There’s that ‘we’ again,” Hannibal says, dryly. It feels like it should be capitalised, a royal ‘we’ as denotes a united front as presented by Alana and Jack. He runs his hand over the weave of the shock blanket, feeling the texture against his fingertips, and asks without inflection. “Is Alana with him, Jack? You would have been wiser to send someone else to accompany Will - they have been estranged since Mathew Brown’s attempt on my life – this is likely to acerbate matters between them.”

“We thought Will would appreciate a psychiatrist he was familiar with.”

“And you don’t think sending Alana is a conflict of interest? Not to say an unnecessary cruelty?”

“I’d be careful how you use that tone, Hannibal. Many people believed Will asking to be your patient again was a *conflict of interest*. As it is, I believe it’s in *your* best interests to withdraw all psychiatric services to Will, ASAP, and provide him with a referral.”

“Will is my patient.”

“Who you fucked in front of three eyewitnesses, doctor.”

Outside an alarm sounds in another part of the ward and footsteps rush by.

Jack says bluntly, “I think that’s grounds for future termination, wouldn’t you?”

Hannibal doesn’t react well to threats.  When the three of them first collided, it was Jack who had asked to keep the sessions as informal ‘talks’ – off the record and below the FBI’s radar - without the protection of doctor/patient confidentiality Hannibal was in the unique position to report any concerns on Will’s well-being directly to Jack, to straddle the uncomfortable line between confident and *informant*.

If Will Graham was a broken pony in Jack’s stable of agents, then Crawford wanted to keep one hand on the rein, one ear in on the discussions at all times.

In short order Jack became a regular at Hannibal’s dining table, and Will Graham was threaded through every conversation they had together.

It bemused Hannibal to play two fronts at once, to plant the seeds of disharmony and watch the discord grow.

When Will changed the dynamic, became an official patient of Hannibal’s – became exclusive, for want of a better word - Jack was cut out from the loop and Hannibal had reported the change in their status with glee. He might not have been has circumspect as he once believed; or maybe Jack’s resentment at being left out in the cold ran deeper than Hannibal had originally suspected.

Jack smiles without humour. “I’d hate for you to lose your licence over this, doctor, now that Will’s an *official* patient no less.”

Hannibal’s face is upturned, his voice gone dangerously low. “Are you holding me accountable for my actions?”

“No, as a matter of fact I’m not. I want you *both* to seek counselling for what happened – neither of you are at fault - but you can’t discount the fact that your doctor/patient relationship is compromised. I assume you’ll forward a referral to me in due time.”

Pettily, Hannibal waits until Jack is halfway out the door before he corrects: “To Will, you mean?”

Jack stops but doesn’t turn around.

“Yes, to Will…via *me*…I don’t want you having contact with each other until I have separate reports on your medical and mental frame of minds at the time of incident. Are we clear?”

I'm not FBI, I'm not obliged to follow orders, yours especially. Hannibal doesn't say: 'You have a modus operandi of employing people not fully vetoed by the FBI. Did you not learn your lesson with Miriam Lass?

An unqualified trainee, a lecturer who failed his psych evaluations: what's next Jack, another child without a full badge behind her? You favour the inexperienced; the unbalanced, and then leave them to the inevitable slaughter. You let Miriam, Will, do your job, took credit when they won, but if it endangered *your* own career you washed your hands clean – they didn't know the rules, you said: or you pleaded 'they broke the regulations wilfully when clearly *I* knew better', or you'd shrug and admit despondently 'they were unstable to begin with' – where was your leadership when they were endangered? What happened when they found the monsters hidden in the cellars?

Those brave children who were cut into evidence slides – *as befitting Beverly's job description* - who lost entire limbs, who had sections of their brains lit ablaze and burned away.

Hannibal says none of this because Jack is a *friend* and because the two of them are masters of civility. They have this in common: they hide their monsters well.

Jack stands like a bulwark in the doorway, head tilted as he listens for a reply, when none is forthcoming he strides from the room, down the corridor, footsteps receding.

He likes Jack. Hannibal doesn't say anything because damningly Cheryl MacKenzie's blood-work on came back clean. *Clean.* And that could be a future problem.

Hannibal sucks his bottom lip inside, chasing the taste and flavours of one Will Graham against his tongue, and feels his cock - exhausted, overly sore - twitch minutely against his thigh.

Like a child screaming down their first roller coaster, he wants to do it all over again.

THIRTEEN HOURS PREVIOUSLY:

"Oh I can beat that!" Jimmy crows. "This one time – "

"In band camp," Brian mouths from behind. They turn left and take a staircase down two flights of stairs, dodging wide-eyed teenagers who turn to stare at them.

"- we were dispatched to check out a body. The stiff offed himself in the bathtub, dropped an electric shaver into the water and wham-bam, lights out ma'am! Poor sap lay there, undiscovered, for *months,* wrinkling up and decomposing until the neighbours complained about the stench emanating from the apartment. We go in with a baby tech – his first day on the job - look for prints, any sign of foul play, document the scene and so on and so forth, etc, etc, etc. At the end of the day the coroner's van arrives and asks for help in removing the putrid mess from the bathtub. Baby tech, obligingly, pulls the plug! Can you believe it? Four layers of skin are instantly pulled off the corpse by the suction of the water and gurgles down the drain-pipe!"

Will grimaces. "Vomiting?"

"Oh, was there vomiting!" Price confirms, gleefully. "Poor baby went the colour of a Granny Smith apple!"

"Amateur." Brian snorts and shoots a glance at Will. "What about you? You did a stint at New Orleans. You must have some ripper stories up your sleeve."

Price jogs forward a little to peer around Brian's bulk, swinging the bag in his hand as he elaborates: "We have a competition - Jack gets to decide at the end of the year who has the best yarn – and then free beers for the winner for the rest of the night! The only rules are a: it must be true, and b: it has to be gross."

"Doesn't sound like Jack," Will ventures thoughtfully.

"No, it doesn't," Jimmy agrees. His smile dims, loses some of its lustre but he doesn't fidget when he admits. "It was Beverly who started it."

Will nods once. Curtly.

He doesn't have the same open *rawness* they remember from the earlier cases; whatever it was that women saw in him and wanted to protect, to mother hen, has been sealed over with chitin-armour. Will emerged from prison with a defensive exoskeleton in place, all of his softer parts hidden away. They're not responsible for believing the evidence, for imprisoning Will in a mental institute; Jimmy believes that to his very marrow. Whatever changes Will underwent can be blamed firmly on Dr. Frederick Chilton and no one else.

Still, Jimmy's taken aback when Will participates.

"New Orleans used to rain, heavy floods, torrential downpours. We had a hiker out in 'gator land. His buddy stumbled back into town saying his pal had keeled over from a heart attack and he'd been forced to leave the body out there. Four of us make the journey in a 4WD because the Coroner's van couldn't do it on those bumpy back-roads, not without sinking into a mud-pit, and the EMT's flat out refused because of the same reasons. The four of us hike around for a bit, split into twos, searching the swamps until we manage to find him and then realise there's four cops and one stiff for the ride home."

Brian starts to grin. "National Lampoon's vacation?"

“Roof-rack was already loaded with climbing and rescue gear, so no, we lashed him onto the front bull-bar instead. Four cops, one 4WD and a body splayed like a dead bug on a window screen, bumping and rolling down the Louisiana mudslide.”

“Oh god,” Jimmy chortles, laughing. “There’s no dignity in death.”

“Hey,” Will defends, and if the smile is small - a little forced because they’re *trying* to include him, to make up for previous mistakes - at least Will doesn’t call them out on it. “We weren’t going to sit in the cabin with a corpse propped up between our shoulders.”

“Well when *you* die it’s not going to be pretty,” Price says, cheerfully. “I pity the man who has to shoo away the seven mutts chowing down on your skinny bones.”

Will snorts. “They’re welcome to it. Better the dogs eat me than have them starve to death in my absence.”

“Well said,” Hannibal observes.

Comically, the three men turn almost as one.

In an adjacent corridor, Hannibal folds the suit jacket over his forearm and waits for Jack to catch up with him. The head of the BAU had been delayed momentarily, trying to soothe an old friend as she spoke with increasing agitation. The four of them group together loosely, blocking up both corridors until the students start elbowing them to get pass.

With muttered apologies, they line their backs against the nearest wall and wait. Further away, Jack lays a hand on the women’s shoulder, their heads close together.

Hannibal’s focus drifts to Will. “You are looking much recovered.”

“Fresh air agrees with me.”

His hair is styled; his clothes are better. Will has lost his neurotic twitches, his nervous tics. He makes eye contact not only with Hannibal but can sustain it with Jack too – with Brian and Jimmy to a lesser degree. He stands tall, shoulders thrown back, head tilted toward Hannibal with the smallest of smiles across his face. Will looks as relaxed as the night he sauntered into Hannibal’s office for his standing appointment, confident he wouldn’t be turned away.  The change in demeanour is bewitching, unsettling too.

“Undisputed,” Hannibal allows. In truth, he’d argue all of these alterations began to manifest in prison, that being surrounded by darkness (the criminally insane) was the exact chrysalis Will needed.

The atmosphere between them is nebulous, not fully formed, it’s charged with possibility. Hannibal breathes it in slowly, eyes half-lidded.

Uneasily, Brian looks between the two of them. “You two are good - I mean - you’re good to *work* together? No attempted homicides in the future, no blood-shed?”

“I would have agreed with both sentiments, Brian, but I believe Will and I have sorted out our differences.” Hannibal’s expression is a perfect blend of chiding self-recrimination. “Chilton played us all for fools.”

Sunshine streams through the high windows. Outside it’s a perfect pale blue wintry day. A bell rings somewhere and the corridors start to thin out, students and books and rowdy catcalls diminishing.

“Well I for one agree with Dr. Lecter,” Jimmy says. He looks over at Will, assessing him with a friendly eye. “You look much better post-encephalitis than you did in the midst of it.”

Hannibal unbuttons his cufflinks, rolling the sleeves to mid-forearm.

Will looks at him sharply before his attention drops to the exposed skin, the sutured railway line of scar tissue running down Hannibal’s arm.

Hannibal cocks his head. “It could be said the encephalitis actually *saved* Will’s life. Without a viable defence in court the FBI would have pushed for an immediate trial and the death penalty, to recover their own public face. He would have been tried, *and found guilty,* within days given the extent of evidence found against him.”

Hannibal’s aware of Zeller’s frantic hand-gestures, of the way Price’s expression falls into dismay.

Not all fences are mended in Crawford’s little team; barbed wire is strung across no-man’s-land, there are topics that are yet to be discussed. Hannibal adds, just to be an ass.

“The fact the disease remained undiagnosed, untreated, for such a long time was a gift I think. Or in the very least a delaying tactic that dragged the court-case out indefinitely. Just think, Will, you might have been executed by now if the disease hadn’t muddied the waters.”

Everyone else lined up against the wall just looks vaguely horrified.

“Well that’s an interesting viewpoint,” Will replies, testily. “Then by all rights I should thank Dr. Sutcliffe for his brilliant *incompetence*...if he weren’t already dead that is.”

Hannibal hesitates, head bowed, then starts rolling up the opposite sleeve as well.

Price looks forlorn. “Is it uncomfortable in here, or is it just me?”

“That’s just the residual memory of being in a high school,” Zeller offers, purposefully changing the subject. “No one was comfortable in high school.” There’s a ballpoint pen tucked behind his right ear, another two in the pockets of his winter coat.

“Since when?” Jack interrupts, and Zeller can admit, Jack Crawford isn’t the type of person to have ever had problems in high school.

Jack moves toward them confidently, the woman he was talking to pacing alongside. “Gentlemen, this is the principle of Dundalk High.”

“Sara Narene,” she introduces, her smile tight and unhappy.

“Also, she’s an old friend of mine.”

She shakes their hands perfunctorily. “I’m sorry for the foot traffic. We released the students early this morning, those who were within walking distance of home, or who catch public transport, were allowed to leave.” Jack grimaces but doesn’t say anything. “The students remaining are waiting for their parents to pick them up, in some cases it won’t be until well after work hours, and we’ve assigned class-rooms for them to wait in…as well as the school psychologist if she’s needed.”

“And the murder site?”

Sara takes a breath. “Local police cordoned off the boiler room hours ago. As far as I’m aware the janitor, who discovered the body, is the only person who’s been inside.”

“Could you take us there?”

“Of course.”

“You know the victim?” Will asks, curiously.

“Michael Yann, previously a student here, he graduated almost four years ago. Michael was a renown seller of pot among the student body.” Her shoulders hitch inward. Her frame is small, bird-like, her voice sounds hollow in the corridor. There’s a dusting of freckles across the bridge of her nose, Sara Narene’s stature is diminutive.

Sara leads them down another corridor pass the indoor gym, the basketball court and the locker rooms, down a secondary flight of steps. “Security had him removed from the premises on a number of occasions. He was a nuisance, small time fry with a home grown crop...but not…not,” she trails off then shrugs. “Well, he didn’t sell the nastier stuff.”

She looks at Jack sideways, almost fondly.

Will, who segues into emotions he doesn’t want, looks away from Sara hastily.

Hannibal raises an eyebrow, intrigued all the more.

The basement floor is wet from run-off water. Downstairs the humidity climbs steadily upward. Pipes and plumbing are exposed, steel veins that creep into the depths of the above building. The lighting is dim; a single bulb casts long shadows across the walls.

A police officer, his uniform damp with sweat and his hat knocked askew, slumps against the door at the end of the corridor. He straightens his posture when he sees them, something akin to relief crossing his features. “Sir.”

“Officer – “ Jack squints at his name-tag. “Jenkins.”

“First responder. Detective Brook asked me to hang around until you lot showed up.” Jenkins hands over a business card with the Detective’s surname and contact number listed. “He did a

preliminary interview with the janitor on site. Brook said to swing by the precinct if you wanted to pick up the brief."

Jack turns the card over in his hand. "Thank you. Brook had no issues turning the case over?"

"He has enough jobs on his plate already...I don't think he minded you lot taking some of the workload." There's a litre of water beside Jenkins, the cap twisted off the bottle, some of its contents missing. His cheeks are splotchy with the heat. Jenkins' jerks a nod at the civilian in their midst. "It's messy inside, sir. Should I escort Ms. Narene to her office?"

"Please do," Sara confirms dryly, before Jack can pass her off. "I know this isn't your jurisdiction, and I'm sorry to call in my favour like this, Jack, but I want this murder solved." She'd been fielding phone-calls from angry parents all day and the school didn't need further bad press. "Any help you can provide would be appreciated."

***

Michael Yann was twenty-one years old and lies naked across the dirty floor of the school boiler room. There's a leather belt looped around his neck, the tail of it grasped inside his own fist. Scratch marks adorn his torso, belly, and inner thighs. Semen has dried tacky across his stomach.

Between his legs, they can see the bulbous end of a bong-pipe, shoved inside his ass. One leg lies straightened; the other is bent. The sole of one foot touches the curve of his knee, he lies posed in a Peter Pan drawing, caught mid-flight.

"COD was strangulation?" Will moves into the room perpendicular to the corpse. He comes in from the side; hands shoved deep into his pockets, staring at the shelves, the potted plant with its venomous leaves and purple flowers, before he switches his attention to the body.

"His attacker forced a physiological response," Hannibal muses.

He looks up when he feels the weight of everybody's attention and quirks an eyebrow, gesturing toward the leather belt.

"George Shuman said the known effects of hypoxia – giddiness, pleasure, light-headedness – heightened any kind of physical contact, and the resultant sensation could 'trip' the somatosensory cortex. The chemical and endorphin rush of a caress - a stroke - could lead to a forced orgasm, regardless of want or desire. Shuman argued the combined chemical releases inside a brain that was oxygen deprived was no less powerful than the effects of cocaine on the human body. In effect, auto-erotic asphyxiation was addictive."

Michael Yann was pretty once.

His limbs were slender, his eyelashes long, there's a delicate curve to his toes, his lips are bow-shaped, chest boyishly narrow. Hannibal walks around his splayed out corpse, careful of where he treads and stands opposite Will. Yann's clothes are strewn across the room; buttons litter the floor.

"Of course men hung from the gallows were often discovered with erections, along with signs of seminal expulsions as they swung. It was public hangings, and the involuntary 'little death,' that gave physicians the idea hypoxia could be used as a cure for erectile dysfunction. They were, in effect, the first practitioners of auto-erotic asphyxiation."

"'Automatic' meaning beyond an ability to control."

Since the orphanage, Hannibal has had control over every aspect of his life. It's solid; iron clad. He could find no fault in it until recently. He examines Will's profile; this looped stitch in his person suit (this fraying vulnerability), and feels the conflicting desire to cut it from his person and to pull the thread, to let the unknown emotion unravel. "Doctor's in the mid-nineteenth century used this observation in practice, and performed breath control on patients complaining of sexual dysfunction, limpness of the penis, or an inability to get hard…until of course it was realised the 'cure' didn't work long-term. Or indeed, outside of the doctor's office."

"Unless someone was willing to strangle them at home as well."

Hannibal shrugs, leaning in close, trying to scent the corpse. There's a bitter smell, but he's not sure if it's the proximity to the boy's lockers, the gym, or something else pervading the air.

"Voluntarily or involuntarily, I can say *definitively* that Michael Yann came before he went," Jimmy says, scratching at the back of his neck. "Copiously."

Zeller hasn't stepped too far inside the room; unlike his normal practice he's pulling on a full forensic suit over his clothes, including the rubber booties. His nose is crinkled as he snaps the gloves on one at a time. "Maybe he preferred rough self-love?"

Until further evidence is collected it's a valid point.

There's nothing that immediately suggests another party was involved, everything Michael Yann suffered - from scratch marks to object insertion to the leather belt around his throat - could have been self-inflicted.

"David Carradine, Michael Hutchence, there's a laundry list of politicians, musicians, actors who fit the same bill," Price adds. "Let's just say he wouldn't be the first to die an embarrassing death…and the fatality numbers involving auto-erotic asphyxiation would be skewered anyway. Any family member who found a parent, sibling, lover hanging from a closet with a belt around their neck, jizz on their stomach, would list the 'official' cause of death as suicide. It's less shameful than stating the *other* truth."

"I miscalculated how long to strangle myself and died, but gee, I had fun doing it?"

“Debatable,” Hannibal argues, looking over at Will and ignoring Zeller’s comment completely. The younger man has been oddly silent throughout the exchange. “I would say suicide is more harmful for the ones left behind overall, than any accident involving ‘self-love’. And if it *is* masturbation then his choice of venue is an odd one.”

“Will,” Jack says, hesitantly. “I know we had an agreement involving cases of a sexual nature, but maybe you can save us some time here? You can empathize with anyone – killer or victim – can you tell me if Michael was coerced? Frightened before he died?”

Will startles, his eyes widening in surprise as he looks up. “What? No.”

“Will.”

“This isn’t FBI business and you promised, Jack, from day one: only the monsters, the odd-balls. Nothing as common as a sexual crime.”

Only the very best for our Will, Hannibal muses, and looks away lest his expression reveal himself. Jack said Will was his fine china, where the most exclusive, rarefied, cases were allowed to steep in his dark imagination. Will was ‘happy’ looking at the cannibals, the angel-makers, the mushroom crops, the killers fighting their own mental diseases were welcomed into the well of his mind, but cases involving sex had *never* been part of the package deal.

It was the one rule Will had insisted upon when he agreed to work for Jack – that if he had to feel what the killers felt, *enjoy* what they *enjoyed* – then at least rape wasn’t something he’d be privy to.

Like Hannibal, Will finds the idea of sexual assault abhorrent.

Hannibal wants to touch his arm, smooth a thumb across the small bones of his nape. He wants to lay out a murder tableau so astonishing Will can sink himself into it, fully submerged, until the horrible beauty of existence (of Hannibal’s art), overwhelms him. This poor boy with the bong in his ass doesn’t qualify. He can remember Will’s bitter smile, the weariness in his voice when he confessed *I’m starting to feel like an old mug*. Taken for granted, burned out on cases the team could have solved the old fashioned way, albeit slower without Will’s input, his gifts used on the common muck.

“I’m sure Price and Zeller can – “

“Not as quickly as Will,” Jack interrupts. He has the good grace to look embarrassed, as if the next sentence pains him. “Time is of the essence, people. If Will can see in a fraction of a second if this case is accident or foul play then the faster we, as a team, can move on from it. Sara’s an old friend, Will. I *owe* her, and last night, she called it in. Just do this, please. It will be the only time I ask.”

Will stirs.  His is hair damp at the nape, curling in the humidity; he retorts angrily. “Bullshit. What about your word to *me*?”  Why do I have to pay your favour, goes unsaid.

Beside him Zeller's expression is carefully blank as he shuts the door, sealing them inside the boiler room.

He's the middle child, Hannibal recalls, the one constantly overlooked. He wonders how much of the teams earlier problems stemmed from Jack's management style.

Zeller squats beside the bag Price had carried into the room. He rummages around for a minute and then pulls out an ultraviolet, a long thin bar of light. "Hold still guys," Zeller says, and then flips the main switch, plunging them into darkness.

**

When they discussed how they were going to lure Hannibal Lecter in, they had agreed hostility would work best. Start off small, then let the chasm grow larger between them, let it gape angry and dark. Jack's doing his part - and yes he's going back on a promise he made to Will before all of this had started - but if he has to *sell* his performance then he might as well *use* it constructively too.

He might as well get Will to *look* at the body, even if the circumstances involved sex.

If Will's objection is genuine, then Hannibal's more likely to believe their relationship is crumbling, and Jack can get behind that idea.  Jack's the white hat, the hero, he's the one getting shit done. In the sudden darkness he breathes calmly, fingers resting against his thigh. "I hope that thing has batteries, Brian."

"Yeah, yeah," Zeller mutters. The room flares, turns violet and purple, showing up the unmentionable stains across the room.

Under the black light Jack's not prepared for the expression in Will's eyes, the unexpected hurt, as if Jack had gone one step too far, as if *this* type of case was a boundary Will had never intended to cross. He takes a breath, and forces himself to say it, to work through the tightness in his throat. "Go on, Will, I'm paying you to do a job here."

It wasn't like the Academy would ever rehire Graham despite his innocence; they had contracted Professor Lochlan to take over Will's classes after he was incarcerated, and once the contract ran out, it was likely the Academy would rehire Professor Lochlan. Financially, Jack was keeping Will afloat with his pinned Visitor's pass, with his hours as a consultant.

Price says primly: "There's a powdery residue around Yann's nose and mouth. It didn't show up under 'natural' lighting but its apparent now. Can you see it?"

"Is it a drug?" Zeller asks, hunkering in.

Black light doesn't show up bloodstains unless luminal spray is used first – but a preliminary sweep with a UV light can reveal seminal fluid, urine, saliva, certain narcotics as well as bone and teeth fragments.  Ultraviolet de-saturates colour, makes everything appear as one hue, but the substance looks black in the trick lighting.

Jimmy frowns. "Maybe. We'll take samples to be certain but it looks closer to a pollen or a nectar to me."

Will takes a step away to make room, to let Price shuffle closer to the body. He squeezes Jimmy's shoulder once, a quick press of gratitude. The other man blinks, his mouth curling upward in response.

The movement places Will near the metal shelving and as he turns he catches sight of a piece of paper, partially hidden under the potted plant, held in place by its weight. He tugs it loose between two fingers. Disingenuously *Go fuck yourself and die!* is written across the page.

Whoever phrased it attended classes for Creeps 101 – each letter cut and pasted from various fonts, from different magazines - and trailing haphazardly across the page. "Foul play is looking good," Will mutters, tiredly, and flutters the paper in the air.

Evening primrose, Nymphaea red flare, moonflower, the Casablanca lily, are all flowers that only bloom at night.

Hannibal would later describe it as a sneeze, as if the little potted plant had gathered its leaves together and unfurled them at once in the semi-dark.

Will jerks bodily. He wipes at his face with the back of one hand, as a little kid might (like Mischa once had), smearing pollen across his mouth and nose. "Hannibal," he says, uncertainly, looking at the powder, the substance near black under the ultraviolet light.

It's a match for what's found on Michael Yann's corpse.

Hannibal pivots away. He crosses the room in two long strides, snapping the overhead light back on and jerking the door open. He ducks his head out, checking the corridor, and snatches up Officer Jenkins' abandoned bottle of water before returning.

"Come away from the plant, Will," Hannibal instructs. "Tilt your head backward, please, close your eyes." He overturns the bottle, letting the water baptise Will's forehead, flow down the natural ravines and curves of his face. Hannibal knots his fingers in the other man's hair, supporting the weight of his head as he flushes the pollen away. "Will, are you feeling alright?"

"Yes."

"Good," Hannibal smiles. It's a gentle up-tic of his mouth.

Helplessly, Will smiles back at him.

He rubs his skull against the other man's supporting palm, feeling the fingers dig into his wet curls, how the pleasure of it zings down his spine. His breathing feels asthmatic, as if it's

harder and harder to expel air from his lungs, as if they're hyper-inflated.  He feels hot and cold by turns – but alright – Will feels better than alright. He blinks the water from his eyelashes and drops his head forward, flattening his nose against Hannibal's chest.

Hannibal stutters, the fingers in his hair tighten to the point of pain. Hannibal sets the empty bottle aside and looks over at the others. "Does anyone else have the same residue on their clothes? On their skin?"

"Given the confines of the room, possibly? I don't know. If you think the powder on Michael Yann - on Will - is suspect should you be that close to him, doctor?"

Hannibal ignores Jack's concern. "There are precautionary steps for an unknown agent. The locker room showers are upstairs, I suggest any contaminated clothing should be discarded and we rinse ourselves immediately. You would do well to inform the agency, Jack, let them set up the proper procedures."

Will feels solid against his chest, curled in tight and oddly relaxed. His wet curls are ruining one of Hannibal's finer shirts but it's no matter. None of Will's actions in the last three minutes feel particularly in character and Jack's face goes tight and unhappy at the prospect.

"Right. You might have a point."

Hannibal curls an arm around Will's shoulders and says into his ear. "Follow me."

End Notes

this was supposed to be a quick and dirty sex fic...but apparently I suck at writing sex scenes and I'm doing my best to avoid it. So porn in chapter two, and a heavy dose of dialogue in chapter one while I procrastinate.
It goes without saying this is sex-pollen fic (eventually), as such, everything written in this story should be taken with a whole shaker of salt - please don't believe anything found here.
and lastly, this is loosely connected to another story I wrote called The Tyger, where Alana and Hannibal speculate over Will's ability in the sack, and come to a disagreement, i guess you could say this is the resolution.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!